

# MODERN TREND IN DECORATION



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Two sections of E.H. Blashfield's Painting "Westward"

"WESTWARD," the large decorative work for the Minnesota State Capitol, at St. Paul, not only is one of Mr. Edwin H. Blashfield's finest achievements, but is entitled to rank with the best contemporary work here or abroad in mural decoration. It has been said in these columns before now that American mural decoration is apt to miss the truly decorative note characteristic of foreign panels, lunettes and ceilings and to run too closely to enlarged easel pictures—to be too pictorial instead of decorative. "Westward" is not open to this criticism. In fact, with true American fearlessness and power of origination it is a combination of both the pictorial and the decorative and most felicitously so.

The representation of a sturdy band of pioneers, men and women, pushing forward over the prairies is frankly pictorial, as indeed it had to be. But the decorative note is struck in certain symbolic figures representing Civilization and Enlightenment floating in air and leading the immigrants on, while a spirit behind the train typifies the forces that will follow in the wake of these pioneer settlers of the West.

A FEATURE of the composition is the forward, pressing trend of every living thing in it—of the oxen drawing the prairie schooner, the men, the women, the spirits in air. Without hurrying, the movement is onward. The decoration conveys the impression of irresistible advance. Even the birds are flying westward. The men and women in the decoration are of the stock that conquers continents, and this is especially true of the principal female figure, the girl, erect and confident, looking straight ahead as she strides along, without dread, toward the unknown. It may not have been in the artist's thought, but this fearless American girl seems to be typical of the greater woman who is behind the achievement of every great man.

To secure variety in his types and make his figures representative Mr. Blashfield used models from different parts of the country. For the figure just spoken of a young Virginia woman posed, which goes far to explain the mingling of pride, courage and refinement in her face and carriage. The girl on the wagon came from Des Moines, the figure bearing the scotchman from South Dakota; the next one, carrying the book and typifying Education, is an American girl with a Scotch name, while the girl carrying the basket of seeds and the girl who posed for the spirit bringing up the rear are from Washington, D. C.

MR. BLASHFIELD has produced in "Westward" a robust and wholesome composition, clear in drawing and pure in color, and making a frank, direct and forceful appeal, and it is singularly free from any suggestion of elaborateness, considering the many figures and details in it. The old criticism was passed upon it that the driver of the oxen was placed on the wrong side of the team. Mr. Blashfield easily might have answered that accuracy in a detail of that kind can with perfect propriety be sacrificed to artistic effect, and, indeed, a man's figure where the oxen wanted the ox driver put would have unbalanced the composition. The artist, however, probably not without some inward sense of amusement, explained that during an advance that covered many hundred miles it was quite conceivable that the driver might at times have stepped over to the other side of the team.

While this artist's largest piece of deco-

orative work is the ceiling in the Astor Gallery of the Waldorf-Astoria, which is sixty-six by forty-four feet, "Westward" is his largest wall panel. It is forty feet long by fourteen inches high. He worked on it from January till November last year, making the studies and sketches for it in his studio and carrying out the whole in the Vanderbilt Gallery in the American Fine Arts Building, his own studio not being large enough for such work.

BORN in Varick place, New York, Edwin H. Blashfield showed his love of art when he still was a mere child. At the age of four he liked nothing better than to sprawl on the floor and draw, and at twelve years, when the civil war broke out, he drew one battle scene after the other. For years his ambition was to go to Versailles to see the battle pieces there. Most of his schooling he received at the Boston Latin School, and it was the Boston artist William M. Hunt who advised him to go abroad as soon as he could and study art in Paris.

A friend took some of his drawings to Gérôme, who seconded Hunt's advice. Accordingly, at the age of eighteen he went to Bonnat, occasionally submitting his work to and receiving advice from Gérôme. Several years, beginning in 1874, he exhibited at the Salon, and he also has shown at the Royal Academy.

AFTER successes as an easel painter he was commissioned to execute some of the decorative work of the Chicago World's Fair, and this led to his engagement by Mr. George Post for some of the decorations in the late Collis P. Huntington's house, on Fifth avenue. Since then he has done many decorations for private residences and public buildings, the former including the library in the George Drexel residence and a music room for Mr. Adolph Lewisohn, the latter the Appellate Court and the Baltimore Court House.

He has illustrated articles and books of which Mrs. Blashfield is the author and collaborated with her on the letter press of "Italian Cities" and in the editing of "Vasari's Lives of the Painters."

ARTISTIC MOVEMENT THROUGHOUT EUROPE Exhibitions in Germany, Greeks Organizing and Italy Looking to Milan Exposition.

TRACING the contemporary movement of art in Europe, L'Art et les Artistes, a Paris monthly publication, reviews three recent exhibitions in Berlin. Keller and Reimer have been exhibiting the bronzes, statues and paintings of Constantin Meunier, among which figured the model of the great "Monument to Labor." A retrospective exhibition of German paintings at the National Gallery also had a great success.

The third event was a loan exhibition of antique art organized by the Kaiser Friedrich Museum on the occasion of the Emperor's silver wedding. English painters were represented by works of Reynolds, Romney and Lawrence. In the collection was "The Letter," by Jean Vermeer van Delft, which was bought by a Berlin amateur, Herr James Simon, for \$80,000, the largest price ever paid by a private collector in Germany for a single picture.

It is noted in the same publication that Herr Becker-Gundahl has abandoned his

painting of interiors for a suggestive style, in which he is evidently ill at ease. Herr Weisshaupt, a well known animal painter, is leaning more and more to landscapes and Herr Richard Pletsch is engaged in scenes of the Valley of the Tsar, near Munich. A new ideal picture, "Modesty and Courage," by Fraulein Anna May, is attracting great attention.

BRITAIN'S national gallery has been enriched by the "Venus with the Mirror" of Velasquez and "Miss Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth," by Mr. J. S. Sargent, as already noticed in cable despatches. Two exhibitions have been recently held, one by the Society of Arts and Crafts, at the Grafton Gallery, and the other by the International Society, at the New Gallery. The latter was chiefly noted for the work of its president, M. Rodin, who is represented by his celebrated group, "The Kiss," and his exquisite "Paolo and Francesca."

Greece is ambitious of a place in the art world, and a committee of her best known painters have met at Athens to organize exhibitions abroad, the first of which will be held at Alexandria. Professor Jacobides, M. Mathiopoulos, a pastelist, and well known artists like Djallinas and Phocas are at the head of the movement.

In the island of Samos a remarkable statue of a goddess has just been unearthed in a perfect state of preservation. The purity of the lines, the plasticity of the form and the style of drapery indicate that it was made in the third century before Christ. It is spoken of as worthy to rank with the Venus of Milo.

THEOPHILE DE BOCK'S works are attracting attention in Holland, where an enterprising dealer of The Hague has been exhibiting some of the designs of this artist, who died in 1904. The Art Society of Rotterdam has also been placing on view a number of still lifes and village scenes in vigorous colors by Mme. Bisschop-Rotterdam.

In Italy every one is looking to the coming international exposition at Milan. One whole room will be devoted to the works of Bianchi, who died not long ago, and sketches by Domenico Morelli will also be exhibited. The Minister of Public Works will send Signor Giuseppe Sacconi's design for the monument to Victor Emmanuel II. A congress of photographic societies will be held to organize a systematic reproduction of Italian works of art. A fine arts exhibition will also be opened at Turin on April 28.

Expositions in Switzerland recently have been few and unimportant, the principal ones being a little exhibition of black and white at the Théâtrerhaus, in Geneva, and some works of W. Lehmann and M. E. Krelloff, shown at the Künstlerhaus, in Zurich. A large central museum is being constructed at Geneva, this work being rendered possible by the generous legacy of the late Charles Galland.

WHO WAS THIS ARTIST?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—Will you please inform me through the columns of the HERALD who among the old masters followed the method of first "laying in" his canvas in carmine color and then covering that brilliant ground with the picture painting? This peculiarity, no doubt, certifies that master's work.

NEW YORK, March 19, 1906. ABET.

## THE FARCE OF ART SHOW JURIES

Some Able Artists Refusing to Have Their Work Submitted to Their Inferiors.

AMONG the exhibitions held in the United States those of the Pennsylvania Academy have ranked unusually high. On the other hand, surprise often has been expressed that the Carnegie Institute, with its great resources, has not made a greater mark in its shows. It will be remembered that the feeling among artists on this point found expression in the satiric canvas "The Pittsburgh Pipe Line in Art," which was exhibited at a "fake" show in the Century Association's galleries this winter. The opinion has been advanced that the Pennsylvania Academy owes its high standard to the fact that one man power practically, though not theoretically, has prevailed there, while at Carnegie Institute the jury system of selection has held sway.

Dissatisfaction has prevailed among some of our ablest artists with the idea of submitting their work to juries often numbering as many as thirty men, a large majority of whom may be their inferiors or be clannish or prejudiced. As a result there are artists ranking very high who refuse to submit canvases to a jury of selection and never exhibit unless, as the expression is, their pictures are "invited." A case in point is that of a New York painter who returned from Paris with the Salon medal only to have one jury after another send back his work with the fatal "R." mark-rejected.

FINALLY he ceased sending in any pictures. Early this winter he was called on by an official connected with an out of town exhibition and asked to send a certain canvas. He declined and gave his reasons. "Well," said the official, "I want that canvas. There's — whose studio is right next to yours. He's one of the two New York men on the jury to select the New York pictures with me. I know he likes this picture. Suppose I call him in and he and I will vote on it right now. He and I make a majority."

The artist consented to this arrangement, his neighbor from the adjoining studio was called in, the farce of voting gone through and the picture formally accepted. Canvases by this artist had been turned down at previous exhibitions of the same body by juries of selection before the official had had as much authority as has since been given him.

ASO-CALLED "Salon of the Dilettanti" forms one of the departments in Brush and Penell, and herein the art jury question is gone over in lively fashion by a character who is called the Painter. He compares the average art jury to the vermouth appendix, an organ that has outlived its usefulness and now is a menace, strongly advocates a surgical operation without delay, and expresses a desire to be one of the active assistants in the art clinic room.

"Strong language? Well, it was needed," continues the imaginary report. "The case was desperate. Wasn't the jury of acceptance a farce? Take the case of the dear old academy in New York, selecting its jurors by alphabetical rote, so that sooner or later each academician should have a chance to get a crack at the other fellow! Wasn't it laughable? Imagine



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Mrs. W.W. Sharp &amp; Children by WILHELM FUNK



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the veteran J. G. Brown passing judgment, if you please, on J. Francis Murphy, or vice versa. Why, the men have nothing in common—neither ideals, nor methods, nor technique, nor sympathy—nothing. Result? Well, Murphy would probably say, "A good fellowship, of Brown's newsboy." That's characteristic, let her go! Brown's always characteristic. And Brown, in the same spirit, would say of Murphy's landscape:—"That's tender, pass it on." Murphy is always tender in art parlance.

OR suppose it were Childe Hassam and Harry Roseland. Roseland could probably paint an old colored woman so natural that the very paint would smell of hoe cake and cotton bolls, and Hassam one of his out-in-the-garden nudes so lifelike that you could actually see the gooseflesh on the skin. But Hassam, if true to his artistic conviction, would be inclined to say of Roseland, "Lithographic picture card," and Roseland of Hassam, "Mere dabs of paint." Wasn't it laughable? Well, that amusing proceeding was being enacted yearly all over the country wherever art shows were given, and the best artists were being forced to the conviction that it was preferable to submit to institutional shows and make their displays under private auspices. It began to look as if the public, if it wanted to see good art, would be driven to the dealers' private exhibitions.

Whistler certainly enunciated a truth when he said that no man was competent to pass on a science if he hadn't devoted a lifetime to its study. But juries were not framed on that principle. He had known in a prominent art institution a former janitor and a colored man of practically no education, of limited experience and very meagre attainment, posing as jurors. Imagine a man like Ranger or a woman like Miss Cassatt, who refuse to enter their canvases in competition at even the greatest of art institutions, submitting their work for critical decision and acceptance to such an aggregation of incompetents! It was ludicrous.

THE fact was that the work of juries was of necessity bound to be more or less farcical for many reasons. For one, there was the element of institutional affiliations to be conserved—no coop could consistently close its

lattice against its own chicks. The painter had known canvases to pass juries because the artist "was one of our boys," and others to be rejected because the artist "was not one of us." Then there was the disturbing factor of personal likes and dislikes—prejudice or personal interest. The painter had stood before a masterful canvas by Gallison, of Boston, when another artist—likewise a jury server—had said, "That man's work is a joke." Fine mental equipment for jury service!

"No, gentlemen," the painter continued, "if the heads of our art institutions are big enough and competent enough for their positions, they are competent and big enough to know what they want and get it. If they are not so qualified, let them get out and make way for others who are. We have enough job hunters and holders in politics—and insurance. For goodness sake let us keep them out of art. If the conventional jury is so far defunct that it is only to be allowed to pass perfunctorily on the little fellows who bother with the time honored and time weakened formality at all? If the jury is to be only a foil for the personal enterprise of the director, about the jury open and stand sponsor for his own successes, and responsible for his own mistakes."

## NOTES FROM THE STUDIOS.

A YOUNG greyhound, called Adonis, has been the model for a piece of sculpture in the studio of Mr. Eli Harvey. Adonis is a great pet and affectionately greets all visitors with a kiss. He is more affectionate than polite, however, for he usually occupies the most comfortable chair in the room and strongly objects to vacating it in favor of anyone else.

Mr. Harvey had some thirteen pieces of his work at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and has been represented elsewhere by paintings and drawings as well as sculpture. His working model of a young bullock, more than half life size,

which was enlarged to sixteen feet and placed at the main entrance to the Agricultural Building at the St. Louis Exposition, has been at the Arts Club. Two of his sculptured lions guard the lion house at the Bronx Zoological Gardens.

MISS ELIZABETH FINLEY will soon sail for Italy to copy "La Danza dei Piccoli Amori," by Albani, and "Tutta con Grappolo d'Uva," by Luini, both of which are in Milan. In Dresden she will copy Rembrandt's portrait of his wife and one of the Rosalba Carriera's.

Mr. Daniel C. French is putting the finishing touches to the seated statue of Governor Wolcott, which will be placed in the State House, Boston. He is about to begin the bas-reliefs of two soldiers, which will fit in the scheme for the setting of the memorial groups for the Custom House at Cleveland, Ohio, of which Mr. Arnold Brenner is the architect.

Miss Marion Swinton, whose studio is in London, occupies temporary quarters in the Van Dyck Building. She has recently finished portraits of Miss Bertha Lennox—a figure standing by an open piano—and of Mr. Theodore Beaumont Rogers, a grand-nephew of the late Jacob S. Rogers. Another woman artist whose studio is in the Van Dyck Building is Miss Gertrude C. Colles. Miss Colles has in her studio a portrait of Mrs. Frederick T. Van Buren and a miniature of Mrs. Van Buren's daughter, Mrs. Willard Vinton King.

Mr. William Funk, who is represented at the Society of American Artists by a portrait of Mrs. Oliver Herford, has in his studio a large portrait canvas of Mrs. W. W. Sharp and children.

## WHAT PICTURES ARE THESE?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—Will some reader of your paper give me any light on the following pictures or help me locate the artists of same:—A canvas of St. Hubertus and stag, 9 1/2 x 12 inches, signed with T and C in monogram in lower left hand corner. Also a girl's head and bust of girl, with large white feather hat, done on African back round plate and signed F. Bellanger. Any information will be much appreciated by an art lover.

LYNCHBURG, Va., March 20, 1906. C. BOLEY.